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Byrd Insists on Prior Notice of C.I.A. Covert Steps

By EDWARD COWAN

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 23 — Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia, the Senate majority leader, threw his weight today behind a Senate bill that would require the President to give advance notice of covert intelligence operations to at least a few members of Congress.

Mr. Byrd's insistence that there be "accountability" by statute rather than by informal arrangement intensified a split between the Carter Administration

and Senate sponsors of a proposed legislative "charter" for the Central Intelligence Agency.

Senator Byrd, who is an ex-officio member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, took pointed exception to opposition expressed Thursday by Adm. Stansfield Turner, Director of Central Intelligence, in testimony before the committee.

No Carte Blanche

The Congress, Mr. Byrd said, will not "give that agency or any other agency carte blanche, just a blank check."

Wearing a bright red corduroy shirt, Senator Byrd discussed the C.I.A. with feeling and at length at his usual Saturday press conference. On other subjects, he made these comments:

¶ Wage and price controls, if authorized by Congress, would not hold down rising costs of imported oil, which he seemed to regard as the chief cause of inflation. He also reported no buildup of Congressional sentiment for controls despite large rises in wholesale and retail prices in January.

¶ Senator Edward M. Kennedy has told

him that after the New Hampshire primary on Tuesday he will come to the Senate floor to manage the criminal code revision bill, "for two or three days." He quoted Mr. Kennedy, who is chairman of the Judiciary Committee, as saying that other members could manage the bill.

¶ Once the American hostages in Teheran were released, President Carter "would have to think about getting out of the Rose Garden, getting out on the stump." He said Mr. Carter "is a good campaigner" and "would like it."

Opposes Unreasonable Restraints

In discussing the intelligence agency, Senator Byrd expressed sympathy for the Administration's contention that the agency has been restricted excessively, but he insisted on prior notice.

"Unreasonable restraints ought to be removed from C.I.A. operations," he said.

He said that "the pendulum swung too far" in the 1970's toward control of the agency, and he asserted there were "too many members of Congress and too many committees that are in the channels for being informed."

But "protection for C.I.A. operations" and "adequate accountability" to Congress are compatible, Mr. Byrd argued, pointing out that a bill sponsored by Walter D. Huddleston, Democrat of Kentucky, and Charles McC. Mathias Jr., Republican of Maryland, would limit required initial notification to eight members of Congress.

Notification, he said, "doesn't mean the Administration has to get approval or give all the details."

Senator Byrd said Admiral Turner's statement Thursday that Congress had not been informed of covert operations "didn't square" with his testimony at his confirmation hearing in 1977 when he left the impression that he would comply with a Senate resolution calling for prior notification. Senator Byrd commented that a resolution lacked the force of law.